

The Church of the Damascus Road Echo!

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Brothers in Blue

This past weekend of Brothers in Blue (NCCF December 2002) was a real blessing for all of us, the candidates, the palanca team, and the team. The talks touched a lot of the candidates in many different ways. I know when I went through Brothers in Blue while I was in the InnerChange Freedom Initiative program, I felt tears falling from my eyes, because one of the guest speakers touched a part of my past life.

We had twenty-five candidates, sixteen palanca team members and twenty-two outside team members at the Brothers in Blue weekend. You could feel the Holy Spirit moving throughout the whole weekend, especially when the candidates were participating in the catacomb service. There were fifteen talks and many of these talks were on Grace.

If you have never been to a Brothers in Blue, I ask that you sign up for the next Brothers in Blue, which will be April 3-6 at NCCF and June 12-15 at FDCF.

The Brothers in Blue is a weekend you will never forget. There's much to learn about God and his love for you. I pray that you will take the time to give up the things you normally do from Thursday afternoon to Sunday night and give those days to the Lord. You'll receive many blessings from God during this weekend. You'll meet a lot of Christian brothers and sisters from the outside who are praying for you everyday because they love you more than any of you can fully understand.

My brothers, I ask that you sign up to attend the next Brothers in Blue weekend. The deadline at NCCF is March 27. The deadline at FDCF is May 30. Don't wait too long to sign up.

— Gary LeCompte

Inside the Echo!

Page 2 - Think God's Not Listening?
Page 2 - And God Said
Page 2 - Prayer of Jabez
Page 3 - Longings
Page 3 - The Ones Who Hurt
Page 4 - Four Pillars, Part 2
Page 4 - When Will It End?

My Experience with the IFI Program

I came to know the IFI program through a few of my good Christian friends in the Anamosa State Penitentiary in the beginning of 1999. They invited me to one of the orientation meetings to get a feel of the goings on in the IFI program.

I finished out the orientation, but I didn't want to get my hopes up because of the length of my sentence. IFI didn't want to take people into the program that had just come into the system and had a long way to go before they had a possibility of being released. Being that I had a fresh 25 year sentence for attempted murder, I knew I had a long way to go before I could even think of getting any type of release from the Board of Parole.

The funny thing about God is that time isn't even in his vocabulary. He saw that I wanted to join into his kingdom through his program that he had started, and made it possible to get me there. A few months later, my DOC counselor told me that I was being classified for the IFI program, but I still wasn't trying to get my hopes up because of what people were constantly telling me.

It was a couple of months later that the DOC officials told me that I was to pack my things because I was heading for the IFI program in the new Newton Correctional Facility.

When I got to E unit (aka: The God Pod), people started to greet me and welcome me freely into their community of very caring Christians. During the next couple of days, I fully realized that God wanted me in his kingdom for the future work that he had said I was worthy of doing, and no obstacles would stand in his way.

However, my flesh just didn't want to submit but wanted to stay as it had been for so many years. So, I quit the program in May of 2000, and the DOC sent me to the wonderful world of Fort Dodge Correctional Facility. If there could be a hell on earth, I would have to say that Fort Dodge was it. It took me the next eight months to figure out that I couldn't continue to live the life that my flesh wanted to live. In January of 2001, I was transported back to the IFI program to start all over again.

The following 18 months were all devoted to nothing but self-change, but that change didn't come easy. God really had to break me of my old ways and make me become humble and obedient once again. This change had to come from inside my own will.

Gradually I started to become more and more devoted to the will of the Father in heaven instead of what I wanted to do to gratify my earthly desires. In all of my years, this would have to be the most difficult thing to overcome, but eventually I learned to lay down my life in order to find true everlasting life in Christ Jesus.

Everything since then hasn't been an easy route to follow, but I have to stay on the straight and narrow or I'll wind up finding myself in a burning lake of fire when I pass from the flesh and into the spirit.

All in all, I would have to say that Jesus Christ can and does save those who truly seek Him, but you have to truly want to change. Otherwise, it will be nothing more than another fruitless effort put forth to accomplish nothing.

In closing I just want to say this. Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your strength and with all of your mind.

— Dustin J. Allison

Spiritual
Renewal

The Prayer of Jabez

This prayer can be found in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10. This little prayer of Jabez is so powerful that you must sit down and take the time to read it. Ask God to enlarge your border as He enlarged Jabez' border. For the next thirty days, follow the plan outlined below that I have taken from The Prayer of Jabez book, page 86; chapter 7.

1. Pray the Jabez prayer every morning, and keep a record of your daily prayer by marking on a calendar or a chart you make especially for the purpose.
2. Write out the prayer and tape it in your Bible, in your day-timer, on your bathroom mirror, or some other place where you'll be reminded of your new vision.
3. Reread this little book once each week during the next month, asking God to show you important insights you may have missed.
4. Tell one other person of your commitment to your new prayer habit, and ask him or her to check up on you.
5. Begin to keep a record of changes in your life, especially the divine appointments and new opportunities you can relate directly to the Jabez prayer.
6. Start praying the Jabez prayer for your family, friends, and local church.

Of course, what you know about this or any other prayer won't get you anything. What you know about deliverance won't deliver you from anything. You can hang the Jabez prayer on every place in your room, where you work, and nothing will happen. It's only what you believe will happen, and therefore do next, that will release God's power for you and bring about a life change. But, when you act, you will step up to God's best for you. Bruce Wilkinson, who wrote the book, The Prayer of Jabez, uses his own experience about what happens when you pray The Prayer of Jabez. I recommend that you get a copy of the book The Prayer of Jabez, when you start out praying the Prayer of Jabez.

—Gary LeCompte

It Still Hurts



"Your x-ray showed a broken rib, but we fixed it with Photoshop."



When We Think God isn't Listening

There are times when we all feel that we are out here all by ourselves, but let me say this: when we feel this way, let's realize that God never leaves us or forsake us. For in these times God is really carrying us in his arms, because he loves us more than we can fully understand ourselves. When Jesus Christ was on the cross for us, and as his arms were stretched out, those arms showed us that his love for us is wider than our little minds could ever start to understand.

As long as I have been a Christian, there are times I wonder: is God really listening to my prayers, or am I trying to do these things myself. I became a Christian at an early age of sixteen or seventeen years old. The church I was going to in Atwater, California, was called the Bible Baptist Church. I went there for a long time before I started trying to do things my way instead of letting God lead me, or letting him drive my life. God can do a better job with our lives than anyone of us could ever do.

So the next time you feel or think that God isn't listening to you; think again. He is always there for everyone of his children and even for those who do not believe in him. He is there for all of us from the Brothers and Sisters in Christ to the sinners and the lost in this world of his. The old saying is that "God don't make no junk," for we are adopted Sons of God. So never let anyone or the devil tell you different. In the past fifty-one years I have made many wrong decisions in my life from the time I was young, in my teenage years, the way I lived my life, and the decision I made that give me this life sentence I've been doing since June 11th, 1981. On June 11th, 2003; I will have been locked up for twenty-two years.

Take it from someone who has really messed up his life, but has been forgiven of all his sins, because God loves me, and I am his son. My prayer for all of you is that when you feel down and out, remember that God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, loves all of you.

— Gary C. LeCompte

And God Said

I said, "God, I hurt."
 And God said, "I know, that's why I gave you tears."
 I said, "God I am so depressed."
 And God said, "That's why I gave you sunshine."
 I said, "God, life is so hard."
 And God said, "That's why I gave you loved ones."
 I said, "God, my loved one died."
 And God said, "So did mine."
 I said, "God, it is such a loss."
 And God said, "I saw mine nailed to a cross."
 I said, "God, but your loved one lives."
 And God said, "So does yours."
 I said, "God, where are they now?"
 And God said, "Mine is on my right, and yours is in the light."
 I said, "God, it hurts."
 And God said, "I know."

Posted on the wall at the Oklahoma City bombing site by K. C. and Myke Kuzmic, Stockton, CA

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The official publication of The Church of the Damascus Road, a Christian Community of Reconciliation, serving the inmate population of the medium security units at Rockwell City and Fort Dodge, Iowa.

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Longings

I take a breath and think of you. My heart is a wreck dreaming of you. Locked from your world by this razor wire. My soul twists up as it catches on fire. All that I've got are some pictures of you. I dream of your Mom and the few good things we had. I'd give up my life to hear you say "Dad." It's never your fault, you're just four years old. I've got to make it right before you're too old. If I could go back and unraise my hand, your Mom would be my wife and our love would make you glad.

I was full of dark pride and too many drugs. I gave it all up because I was too proud. Too proud to admit that what I did was wrong. Too proud to admit that I still love your Mom. "Too proud to admit," should be my song. Lord, take away my sins.

All I need is you and your Mom to share our lives together, happy and sad, to make your world better by having a real Dad. God, I give you my hand and hope she knows I'm holding hers, too. I miss my little girl. I love her very much. God bless you and may he bring us together soon!

— Thomas C. Blank, FDCF 12-16-02



Special Times for the Israelites

"This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it ..." Exodus 12:14

The biblical calendar had many feasts and festivals. They were connected with the changing of the seasons or special events. Below are some of the special days observed by the Israelites.

Put on Your Armor

As Heaven and Hell struggle for me, Forces of light, darkness, and those you can't see.

Put on your armor, your trust and your faith Believe in the holy one, and seal your fate.

We're on a journey of good and bad, Life's ups and downs of happy and sad.

Don't let sinfulness control your life, Put on your armor, put up a fight.

Ask for forgiveness from the Lord of light, You've known in your heart, wrong from right.

Put on your armor, take a vow; Deliver yourself, from the here and now.

Ask Lord Jesus into your life, Let him surround you with his holy light

Put on your armor do it tonight; Put on your armor and win the fight

—David Bern

The Ones Who Hurt

We sit behind these dingy walls day after day and go up and down the maze of halls with the hand we dealt ourselves in life. We think we should fold, some of them cry, and some of them moan, some of the rest talk to each other in not such a nice tone. The oldtimers they say they remember the time when you never saw so many kids in prison for longer than "dimes."

The one thing that none of us have ever given one little thought to is, "Yeah, we cry, yeah we hurt, but what about the ones at home, how much do they hurt and, for our freedom, how hard have they fought?"

Jaremy J Lee, NCCF

Use the code to find the name of the special day and the month of the Jewish year in which they are celebrated.

CODE:

ABCDEFGHIJKLMN OPQRSTUVWXYZ
ZYXWVUTSRQPONMLKJIHG FEDCBA

Season	Holiday	Month
1. End of Summer	(New Year)	GRSHIR
2. Fall	(Day of Atonement)	GRSHIR
3. Fall	(Festival of Booths)	GRHSIR
4. Winter	(Festival of Rededication)	PRHOVE
5. Winter	(Festival of Lots)	ZWZI
6. Spring	(Feast of Unleavened Bread)	MRHZM
7. Spring	(Feast of Weeks/Pentecost)	HREZM

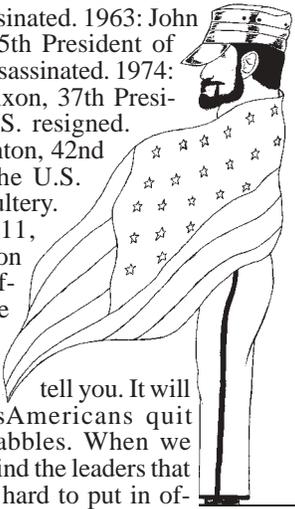
Answers: 1. Rosh Hashanah; Tishri; 2. Yom Kippur; Tishri; 3. Sukkot; Tishri; 4. Hanukkah; Kislev; 5. Purim; Adar; 6. Passover; Nisan; 7. Shavu'ot; Sivan

When Will It End?

1865: Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the U.S. was assassinated. 1901: William McKinley, 25th President of the U.S. was assassinated. 1963: John F. Kennedy, 35th President of the U.S. was assassinated. 1974: Richard M. Nixon, 37th President of the U.S. resigned. 1997: Bill Clinton, 42nd President of the U.S. committed adultery. September 11, 2001: the nation once again suffered a terrible tragedy.

When will it all end? I'll tell you. It will end when we as Americans quit our petty squabbles. When we truly stand behind the leaders that we worked so hard to put in office, when we take immediate and decisive action against those who attack and desecrate our Lord, then, and only then, will we have a smooth and effective government.

— Michael Bennethum 1-16-03



Friends

Friends may come, and friends may go. So I am told. But true friends will come together in the end, for they are bound together with love and strength which forms an unbreakable link. They treasure their friendship and hold it within and carry it with them 'til the bitter end. And in the end only the creator can help them mend a friendship that will never end.

— Matthew Jordan

Commitment

Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality. It is a word that speaks boldly of your intentions, and the actions which speak louder than words. It is making the time when there is none, coming through time after time, year after year. Commitment is made of the power to change the face of things. It is the daily triumph of integrity over skepticism.

Author Unknown



"WHEN HE YELLS AT YOU AND CALLS YOU BAD NAMES, HOW DOES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?"

Four Pillars of a Man's Heart, Part 2

"Bringing Strength into Balance"

Listen Up! The third Pillar: a Mentor. "Someone who functions to some extent as a friend or father figure. Someone who fundamentally affects and influences the development of another, usually a younger man. Someone who nurtures the soul. Someone who shapes the character. Someone who is calling another to be a complete man, a whole man, and, by the grace of God, a holy man."

A Mentor is someone who answers questions slowly or quickly, but with knowledge, drive, purpose, vision, confidence, experience, wisdom, strength and character. He is a straight-talking, straight-living man, unthreatened by those who oppose him. Nevertheless, one trait: he has a relationship with another at the point of need, not on a magazine cover or a television, but one who is near, and touchable, whatever his title. His speciality is knowing something that others don't know: when to plant and when to harvest, or when the herds will arrive next spring. He is one to whom people go with their questions, problems, pains, and diseases of the body and the mind. He is the one who can think through the issues that are not obvious to other people. In other words he is a seer and a prophet in a sense of seeing deeply. He joins other people in living out their core values, rubbing shoulders along the way, not for an hour on Tuesday or Thursday, but daily, moment by moment, and over a lifetime. This is my goal: to be a mentor, one of the pillars of masculinity. I will keep it and maintain it. I will stand tall and straight. I will never lean toward the know-it-all side or the silent, passive side. It's all solid weight. Without this the four-pillared man will never be.

The fourth and final Pillar: a Friend. When Jesus had finished his sacrificial work, just before he ascended to "prepare a place" for his people to join him at the table forever, he commissioned his disciples using the vocabulary of friendship, saying, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). These were words of connection. They were words of love, commitment, and promise. They were words which would drive away all fear. They were words which would overwhelm the heart and fill it with courage. They were words from God to you and me. This one pillar stands a little taller, a little straighter than the others, a pillar bearing a little more of the weight of manhood than the others. It's the way of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It's for God's sake and for the family's sake. It's for the sake of my own soul finding a place, looking for opportunity, taking the initiative, not worrying about feeling awkward, strange, or out of my element. It's stepping in like a man and getting the job started.

You see, I can never be in balance unless

it's from a friendship with the living God. I can't be the friend I want to be unless and until I'm connected with the ultimate friend, a big and powerful friend, an omni-present friend, who is there on the battle fields with me in life. In this world there are those who will be engulfed with pain, weighed down with tension, and frustrations on every side. With God, I reach down, even if I have to reach into the dirt, or a garbage dump, I'm more than capable of picking people up, dusting them off, and setting them on solid ground again. I make promises to people, building trust. A promise is a personal guarantee that will always be true and be utterly counted upon. I know that as we journey through this life we will see a lot of suffering, pain, misery, frustration, limitations, perplexities, and problems. I'm willing to help, by sharing your burden and helping them learn. I can't promise to take the pain away, but I will promise to go through it with you. I will be your best friend close at hand. So instead of fighting the agony of your loss, let's ask for God's joy, confidence, perseverance, and completeness in our relationship. God knows what you need, and he wants to help you (me too) learn to live again. You only need to ask. Then hang in there long enough to see him come through for you (and me). God is there for you (me too). What he promises he will do, so don't cut and run, stay the course and enjoy the finish. I will remain faithful, I'm not perfect. I'm not the Lone-Ranger. I choose to never be too busy or too lazy or too proud. I want to lock arms with other men walking in the same direction. I'm willing to live, not going it alone, but in the company of brothers. Please put your trust in God along with me. I promise to walk with you each step of the way. My friend, you and I were made to be a King, a Warrior, a Mentor, and a Friend. So be it. AMEN! AMEN! Love in Christ

—Victorio DeLance

Contributions invited

The editor of this newsletter is inviting ALL READERS to contribute articles, poetry, art work, and opinions for the newsletter. So don't be bashful.

Worship & Bible Study

FDCF Fort Dodge

7:00pm Wednesdays Holy Communion
6:30pm Fridays Prayer Team
7:00pm Fridays Bible Study

NCCF Rockwell City

6:30pm Tuesdays Prayer & Bible Study
6:30pm Thursdays Holy Communion